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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHENGDU 000158

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DEPT FOR EAP/CM AND S/STC  
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: SOCIAL DISTURBANCES FLARE UP IN TIBETAN AREAS

REF: CHENGDU 152

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CLASSIFIED BY: John Hill, Acting Consul General, United States  
Consulate, Chengdu.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In recent weeks there have been three separate social disturbances in Tibetan areas inside and outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Accounts of the incidents were originally reported in the international press. Recently, Post was able to confirm and learn more details about each of the three events. In two conflicts in Kardze Prefecture of Sichuan Province, local Tibetans clashed with authorities over mining and tourism development of important holy sites. In a separate incident in the TAR, authorities destroyed an important religious statue at Samye Monastery and imposed restrictions on construction of new religious images. End Summary.

T Tibetans in Sichuan Clash with Police  
Over Mining of Holy Mountain  
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¶2. (U) On June 11 and June 13 Taiwan and Hong Kong-based news outlets reported an incident in late May in which at least 400 Tibetans from Bamei Town, Dawu County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province protested the construction of a mine at the base of Mt. Zhara (Chinese: Yala Shan), a mountain considered holy by Tibetan Buddhists. According to the reports, Tibetans destroyed the residences and vehicles of Party and government officials and the mine owner. Armed police were called in to quell the disturbance and several Tibetans were reportedly detained. This incident was previously mentioned reftel.

¶3. (C) Consulate spoke to contacts from Bamei Township and Tagong who confirmed the press accounts, but qualified there was no news about any Tibetans or police seriously injured or killed. The Bamei contact said that after the riots, ten villagers took the train to Chengdu to petition the Sichuan Provincial Government. These individuals were taken off the train and arrested. Also following the disturbance, many residents of three villages in Bamei Township ran away for fear of reprisal, and there are rumors that some were arrested. Our contacts reported that police went to several Bamei villages and beat the relatives of individuals who ran away and destroyed some personal property.

¶4. (C) Our contacts explained that following the May 27 disturbance due to the beginning of large-scale construction at

the mine site, local officials sought to negotiate with local Tibetans who opposed the development. Officials contacted the reincarnate lama Yunden Gyamtso, Abbot of Garthar Monastery in Bamei Township and Vice Director of the Kardze Prefecture Buddhist Association to speak to villagers. According to our contact in Bamei, Tibetan villagers called him a "Chinese-minded" reincarnate lama and rejected his attempts at mediation. A second reincarnate lama, Abbot Druga from Tashi Monastery in Tagong was also recruited to assist government officials in negotiations with villagers. Bamei villagers told the reincarnate lama not to come, saying the issue was "none of his business."

15. (C) Following these attempts at negotiation, villagers went to Tagong Monastery with several pages of "petition documents" or complaints and sought to have them translated into English by an English-speaking monk. Our Tagong contact did not say whether the villagers were successful in having the documents translated. The contact highlighted two main issues leading to the escalation of the Bamei disturbance. He said the first issue was one of Tibetan villagers trying to protect a holy site, a relatively common occurrence as Tibetan areas become more developed. The second issue, which led to the explosiveness of the situation, was the anti-Chinese political element accompanied by the destruction of government and private property. The contact speculated the villagers ran the risk of being charged with separatism and "destruction of ethnic solidarity" for these anti-Chinese actions.

#### Tibetans in Sichuan Protest Development of Holy Mountain

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16. (C) A similar disturbance, also in Sichuan Province's Kardze Prefecture, was reported on June 16 on a Hong Kong based internet site (Kan Zhongguo Baodao). According to the report, a conflict between local Tibetans and government developers occurred in Yading of Daocheng County in mid May because of local opposition to the development of hotels and a cable car in a protected area which includes a holy mountain area. Developers had begun to cut down swaths of forest in the

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mountain area. (Note: Yading is a nation level reserve in Daocheng County which was unknown to the outside world until the late 1990s. It is a mountain sanctuary and major pilgrimage site which was sanctified by the Fifth Dalai Lama. End Note).

17. (C) A contact from Yading Management Bureau confirmed to consulate there had been a "serious clash," and that three or four construction workers were injured. The official said the area had been closed to the public since May 20, and that he did not know when the park would be reopened. He added that major travel agencies in Chengdu have been informed not to bring any tourists to the area until receiving further instructions from the government. The contact did not comment on injuries to local Tibetans involved in the conflict.

#### Chinese Officials Destroy Statue of Reincarnate Lama in the TAR

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18. (C) On June 5, the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), based in India, reported on the May demolition by Chinese police of a nearly completed religious statue at Samye Monastery in Lhoka Prefecture of the TAR. The huge gold and copper statue of Guru Padmasambhava, a reincarnate lama revered by both Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists, was funded by Chinese devotees from inland China.

19. (C) A consulate contact who runs a business connected with Samye Monastery confirmed that a large group of Chinese soldiers came to the monastery and destroyed the statue. The director of the monastery's Democratic Management Committee (DMC) was seriously criticized, and the monastery banned from building any new statues in the future. Consulate contacted the General Director of the Samye Monastery DMC who said "small statues can be donated, but big ones are banned. I have nothing more to say now."

HILL